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Reagan Hits Plan To Cut Defense

Radio Address Attacks 'Signal of Weakness'

By Eleanor Randolph
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President Reagan said yesterday that it is time to "stop treating our defense establishment and intelligence agencies like enemies," and that a House budget plan that scales back defense spending would send "a signal of weakness" to the world.

"It is sheer folly to blindly weaken ourselves when our adversaries are conspiring and working so hard to bleed and cripple America," Reagan said in his Saturday radio address. "It is time to stop treating our defense establishment and intelligence agencies like enemies and concentrate our attention and anger on the true enemies of freedom and democracy in the world."

The remarks, aimed at House-Senate Budget conferees, who were at a virtual impasse Friday, drew a sharp reply from House Majority Leader James C. Wright Jr. (D-Tex.), who called it "a rhetorical orgy."

"In the wake of fanatical bombings—terrorist attacks—cowardly kidnappings, which . . . mock the efforts of the White House to deal with them, we silence our criticism and publically support the president of the United States," Wright said.

"It is unfortunate that Mr. Reagan apparently cannot resist the temptation to make partisanship attacks on us over questions of honest judgment and priorities," he added.

Wright said that it is "emphatically not true" that the House proposal cuts vital defense needs, noting that defense spending will increase \$15 billion under the House plan, \$6 billion below the Senate's version.

"In the campaign last year, Mr. Reagan made a solemn promise to protect Social Security COLAs [cost of living allowance]," he said. "Now he wants us to break that promise as the Senate has done."